

**EXPRESS  
YOURSELF**

# North East Festival of Languages

6th January to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026

## Festival Report





6 January to 31 March 2026



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This evaluation was undertaken and the report written by:

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Chief Executive Officer, International Newcastle



The Festival was part-funded by the North East MSA:



The Festival grant was managed by:



# Introduction and overview

Express Yourself: North East Festival of Languages 2026 was the sixth annual celebration of the North East's diverse languages and cultures and our connections to the world for children and young people aged 3-18.

It had the largest participation to date, with 116,669 children and young people participating from 464 individual schools, many registering for multiple activities. The Festival is the largest event of its type in the UK and Europe and has grown steadily in terms of both its content and reach since 2021.

The full Festival programme of 109 activities was open to North East schools, community schools and groups. There was an extensive UK Schools' Programme. International schools engaged with the Festival's world friendship project and could also get involved through their North East partner schools.

Between January and March 2026, the Festival:

- provided a comprehensive programme of free language and cultural activities designed to enrich educational experiences and inspire children and young people (3-18)
- involved 55 North East, UK and international partners delivering free activities to schools and groups
- delivered in-person and online events, classroom activities, creative multilingual projects and competitions, all supported by teaching resources
- focussed on having fun, but was also aligned with curriculum and inclusion objectives
- inspired engagement with languages, promoted intercultural awareness, raised aspirations, promoted inclusion and widened perspectives of future education and career opportunities

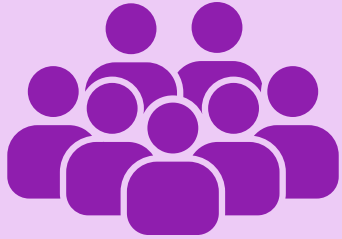
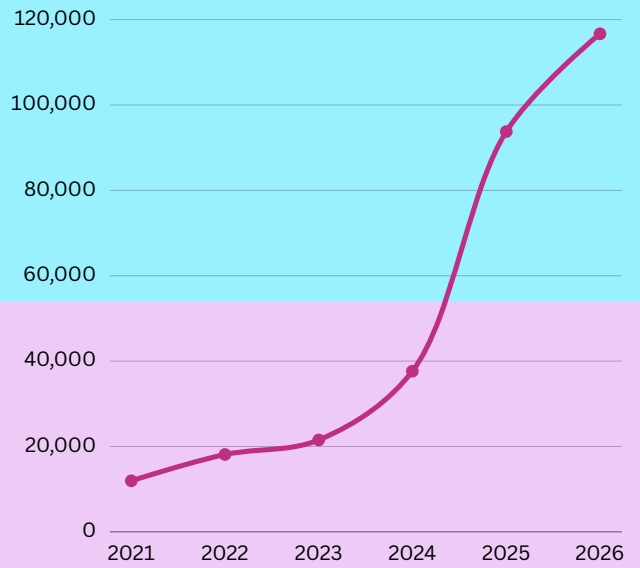
This report summarises the full Festival evaluation and includes:

- key achievements, strengths, challenges, recommendations
- the timeline of Festival development, launch and delivery
- the 2026 Festival programmes
- an overview of participation and engagement in the Festival
- Festival impact on schools and children and young people
- feedback from teachers on pupils' and schools' experiences
- links to creative legacy products and Festival films
- Festival partners and their feedback on the Festival
- added value linked to other activities
- an overview of marketing, communications and costs
- planning for the next Festival
- acknowledgements and links

The evaluation involved a review of participation monitoring data, teachers' and partners Festival feedback surveys, plus five filmed case studies and an analysis of costs and communications.



# FESTIVAL figures



**116,669**

3-18 year-olds taking part



**1,071**

registrations from 464 schools



**1,400**

teachers engaged pupils in activities

## PROGRAMME

**66**   
in-person events

**21**   
online events

**14**   
classroom activities

**5**   
creative multilingual projects

**3**   
competitions

**55**   
North East, UK and international partners

**100%**  
want to be involved in the Festival again

## TEACHERS' FEEDBACK

Survey responses: 'Excellent' or 'Good'

**98%** Festival programme content

**97%** Activity materials provided

**97%** Access to activities

**95%** People delivering activities

**82%** Pupils engaged in a new activity

**69%** Pupils are more motivated to learn languages

## INVESTMENT



£204,354 total Festival cost

58% in kind contributions

£1.75 per pupil engagement

6 January to 31 March 2026



**EXPRESS YOURSELF**

North East Festival of Languages

# Key achievements



## Record-breaking participation for the sixth year running

116,669 children and young people took part (target 50,000), 464 schools registered for 1,071 activities and an estimated 1,400 teachers were involved. The Festival continued growing in terms of reach and participation.



## Creative, inclusive, flexible programme

A diverse 'pick and mix' programme (in-person, online and classroom-based) for pupils from Early Years to Key Stage 5 including: European and world languages and cultures events and resources; creative multilingual projects; competitions; curriculum-aligned and careers-related activities and resources



## High quality programme content and delivery

Feedback from teachers responding to the Festival survey demonstrates the high quality of the programme, including people delivering activities (74% excellent, 21% good), content (76% excellent, 22% good), materials (72% excellent, 25% good) and access to activities (69% excellent, 28% good)



## Festival legacy creative products

Tangible outputs from the creative multilingual projects: 2 Calligrams ebooks; a multilingual e-anthology of children's writing; Festival song video of children and young people's performances; World Recipe e-Book; Together We Fly world friendship project photobook and public installation of children's artwork at Newcastle Civic Centre; plus 5 case study films on activities

# Core strengths



## Strategic Partnerships

Festival success was underpinned by long-standing and new collaborations with regional, national and international partners, including local authorities, universities, cultural and community organisations and language specialists



## Efficient delivery model

The long lead in time (from June) with a clear timeline, advance launch and bookings from November and centralised coordination enabled streamlined organisation, communications and delivery of the Festival, as well as effective monitoring - aided by increased core capacity in the Festival Team in 2026



## Outstanding value for money

Total cost: £204,354, with 58% in-kind contributions from partners, 34% core funding (North East Mayoral Strategic Authority) and 8% grants and awards for activities, the Festival leveraged substantial resources, enabling broad access and rich content



## Improved communications and outreach

Communications and PR work was strengthened, with promotion and publicity scaled up in all areas including the introduction of a Festival newsletter, media engagement, more posts on social media channels with more films and digital content and much greater documentation and reporting of events.

# Benefits from improvements in 2026



## Coordination and administrative capacity was significantly increased

New in 2026, funding to employ two freelancers to provide communications support and manage student interns, built core capacity in the Festival Team and enabled the Coordinator to focus on partners, delivery, liaison with schools and registrations and monitoring. An additional communications volunteer writing articles and introducing new e-newsletters was invaluable.



## Paid student internships built capacity for digital content creation

New for the 2026 Festival, engaging five students via paid internships as Digital Content Creators, built capacity for attending, documenting, promoting and profiling Festival activities and provided valuable real-world work experience for students from Newcastle and Northumbria Universities.



## Greater capacity to document and profile events and activities

The addition of the Communications Lead, Social Media lead and intern lead, a communications volunteer and five paid Festival student interns, significantly increased filming, photography and digital content creation, increasing the profile of Festival activities, as well as sharing Festival experiences and impact.



## Mandating registration increased monitoring effectiveness

Requiring registration for all relevant events and activities for the first time (apart from drop in events) increased the accuracy of tracking engagement and enabled targeted promotion to increase take up of specific events and activities, as well as improving the effectiveness of monitoring and reporting.



## Refining and adding to programme content addressed gaps

Reviewing Festival 2025 feedback on content from teachers and delivery partners, led to the identification of gaps and new opportunities to improve the programme. These were addressed by engaging new and existing partners, to increase: Early Years and Foundation Stage provision; Key Stage 2 careers provision; classroom activities and resources; multilingual content; world languages and cultures content; the number and age range for competitions; and additional Key Stage 3-5 activities.

## Ongoing challenge



### Uneven engagement of North East schools

Engagement was strongest in Newcastle and Durham, where the Festival has the most well established networks. It did increase in the other five local authority areas, but there is an need to engage more schools in opportunities.

## Recommendations



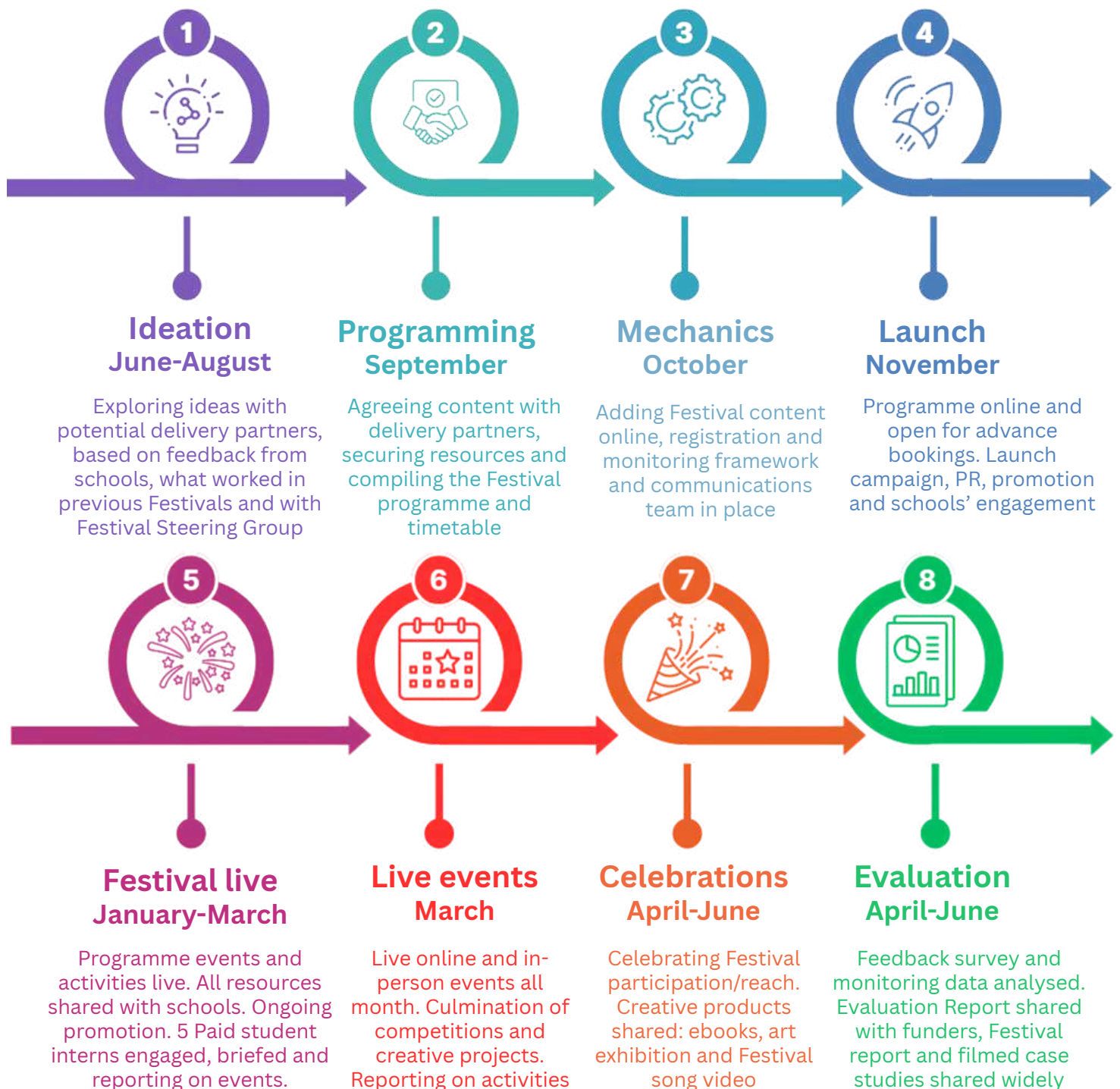
### Maintain improvements and address engagement of NE schools

It will be essential to build on the success of the Festival, which over 6 years has improved continually, has a track record of providing high quality and engaging content and is well organised and impactful. Maintain and build on success and improvements and address engagement of NE schools

# Festival timeline

Design, development, delivery and evaluation of the 2026 Festival started in June 2025. It built on evaluation findings from the 2025 Festival and the well-established partnership model and process coordinated by International Newcastle. The Festival Coordinator was joined by 2 part time communications staff, a volunteer and five student interns, which provided more core capacity and communications capabilities.

The pre-launch and advance bookings from in mid-November gave schools longer to plan. Most activities were live from 6<sup>th</sup> January and ran to 31<sup>st</sup> March. Creative products were shared. Festival feedback surveys of teachers and partners were included in detailed evaluation shared with funders. This summary Festival report will be shared widely.



# Festival programme

The Festival programme celebrated the diversity of languages and cultures in the North East and its connections to the world. It was designed to inspire children and young people's learning, raise aspirations, promote inclusion and widen perspectives around future education and career opportunities. It provided a wide range of high quality, age-appropriate, interactive activities, resources and events delivered free of charge to schools between January and March 2026.



**North East Festival of Languages**  
6 January to 31 March 2026

Our sixth annual Festival is bigger than ever, with FREE events, activities and resources for 3-18 year-olds. The Festival aims to spark curiosity, foster inclusion, raise awareness and open up the world of opportunities available to children and young people who speak different languages and understand diverse cultures.

The full Festival programme is open to all schools in the North East: Newcastle, Northumberland, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Gateshead, Durham, Sunderland. There is a [programme for UK schools](#). International schools can engage through North East partners and the 'Together We Fly' world friendship art project.

View the full Festival programme from page 2.  
Click on these images for summaries of free activities, events and resources by age range, category and language.



Schools in the North East could access the full programme of activities: Northumberland, Newcastle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Gateshead, Sunderland and Durham.

[Download the 10-page full Festival programme](#)

This was available online through the [What's On](#) page on the Festival website and activities were also presented by category online. Each Festival activity had its own webpage with full details and registration links.

The programme was shared widely through:

- direct contact with schools
- contact with schools through local authority contacts and schools' networks
- partners' newsletters, websites and mailings
- media contacts
- Presentations at events with teachers
- Festival social media and newsletters

The UK Schools' Programme was the largest offered in 6 years of the festival. It included classroom activities and online events as well as access to one Festival competition. It was shared through partnership networks, mailings and social media.

[Download the 6-page UK Schools' Programme](#)



International schools were invited to get involved in the region's world friendship project, Together we Fly. They could also get involved with partner schools' Festival activities.

**Express Yourself**  
**UK SCHOOLS' PROGRAMME**  
**North East Festival of Languages**  
6 January to 31 March 2026

*Create your own Festival programme!*

Pick and mix from FREE events, classroom activities and competitions to build skills and celebrate diverse languages, cultures and global connections

**Event for teachers**

- **Becoming a European Parliament Ambassador: School** Webinar for UK secondary and college teachers: 3:30-4:30pm on 29 January

**Classroom activities (6 January-31 March)**

- **Ursa Lingua's Castle Quest: Escape Room Adventure** (KS2)
- **Multilingual Me KS2 lessons:** Exploring and celebrating languages
- **Stories from around the world: Food on Film** activities (ages KS1-3)
- **6 Primary French lessons: World Cup 2026** (Y6-6, Y7)
- **Exploring and celebrating Indigenous African languages** (KS1-4)
- **Afro-Ecuadorian Fairytales** resources (English/Spanish) (KS2-5)
- **Fun with Japanese interactive activities** (KS1-2)
- **Multilingual digital stories:** 5 films made by children (KS2-4)
- **Fun with Felix and Franz!** primary German lessons (KS1-2)
- **Spanish Cinema in the Classroom** (KS4-6) films with resources

**Languages and Careers events and resources**

- **Modern Languages in the Working World** webinar (Y8-9) 7 March
- **Spanish language and careers** webinar (Y8-9) 3 March
- **Languages at Work** webinar & language challenge (Y9-9) 5 March
- **Football Lingua** messages and careers webinar (KS2-9) 6 March
- **Where can languages take me?** Webinar (Y8-9) 26 March
- **How Languages Changed my Life** stories

**Live languages and cultures events (March)**

- **Lingua Cub's French Fun 4 online sessions** (ages 3-7) on Wednesdays 4, 11, 18 and 25 March
- **Lingua Cub's Super Spanish 4 online sessions** (ages 3-7) on Fridays 6, 13, 20 and 27 March
- **Wuschel online German sessions** (KS1-2) 9 and 16 March
- **Planet Arabic Girls Learn! Webinar** (KS4-5) 10 March
- **Bilingual poetry online French/English** (KS4-5) 12 March
- **Ursa Lingua's French Feast KS2 live lesson** online 27 March
- **Ursa Lingua's Spanish Surprise live lesson** online 19 March

**Competitions and celebrations**

- **Karneval Mask Competition** NE/UK (KS2-6) 6 January-6 March
- **German Week 19-24** January UK primary and secondary schools
- **JalaChomp** (Japanese) primary and secondary, November-March
- **World Children's Haiku Contest** (UKIS) submissions by 28 Feb
- **French Poet Video Competition** register by February, submit May
- **Anthea Bell Prize for Young Translators**, open until 27 March
- **Joutes oratoires lyonnaises** regional heats to Feb, final in March
- **World Speech Day** James 21<sup>st</sup> March 2026
- **Multilingual Verses** Open competition, various deadlines to 2027
- **Celebrate Speaking!** Festival of speaking languages, 1-28 Feb

**Resources and support**

- **ENACT Around the World Club** packs (North East, UK, Worldwide)
- **Around the World Education Packs** from British Council
- **British Council languages support** for schools
- **Association for Language Learning** and ALL North East
- **National Consortium for Languages Education**
- **European Centre for Modern Languages**

**Festival participation supports:**

- **International School Award** Applications for British Council's International School Award levels: Foundation Certificate, Intermediate, Accreditation
- **Schools of Sanctuary** Schools can get involved in a range of activities and events to embrace the languages, cultures and traditions of all pupils and the school community.

[Click here for UK schools programme online](#)

The Festival is part-funded by the North East Combined Authority

**NE North East Combined Authority** | **Kim McGuinness North East Mayor**

# Changes to the 2026 programme

| Activity  | 2026       | 2025      | Programme changes based on teachers' and partners' feedback  |
|---|------------|-----------|--|
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                    | <b>112</b> | <b>63</b> | The programme almost doubled in size in terms of no. of activities offered.  |
| <b>Creative Multilingual Projects</b>           | 5          | 4         | Added a new project. These are popular as they can be delivered over 3 month period in school or in groups with packs of resources provided by partners for teachers and include any and all languages spoken.                 |
| <b>Competitions</b>                             | 3          | 1         | Two competitions added to accommodate the main languages taught in schools (French, German, Spanish), with age ranges extended from KS2 to KS3 and KS4, in one case - with a longer period for schools to participate.         |
| <b>Classroom activities</b>                     | 14         | 7         | More classroom activities developed by partners for delivery in schools over 3 months. Substantial education resources provided for pupils/teachers: taught languages, world languages, multilingual.                          |
| <b>Online events - languages and careers</b>    | 5          | 4         | Increased the number of webinars for KS3-5 pupils (with one extended to KS2), as well as offering in person events and produced a resources for classroom activities for careers from KS2-5 (videos and toolkit).              |
| <b>Online events - languages &amp; cultures</b> | 16         | 3         | A wider range of events from EYFS to KS5 were developed with partners, most with recordings and resources to use after the events. This was in response to demand from teachers.   |
| <b>In-person events</b>                         | 66         | 43        | The Festival increased the offer and type of in person events and extended the age ranges. Schools and pupils appreciate immersive experiences with native speakers and people who enjoy sharing their languages and cultures. |
| <b>CPD events for teachers</b>                  | 3          | 1         | The Festival does not usually offer CPD, as the focus is on children and young people, but a number of small events were offered in 2026.  |

| ACTIVITY                                    | 2026 registrations | 2025 registrations | % change in registrations | 2026 Pupil participation | 2025 Pupil participation | % change 2025 to 26 |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                | <b>1,071</b>       | 719                | 49%                       | <b>116,669</b>           | 93,798                   | 24%                 |
| <b>Creative Multilingual Projects</b>       | 229                | 185                | 24%                       | <b>26,097</b>            | 18,088                   | 44%                 |
| <b>Competitions</b>                         | 107                | 33                 | 224%                      | <b>9,871</b>             | 3,479                    | 184%                |
| <b>Classroom activities</b>                 | 344                | 102                | 237%                      | <b>47,347</b>            | 14,739                   | 221%                |
| <b>Online events languages and careers*</b> | 169                | 256                | -34%                      | <b>19,762</b>            | 48,186                   | -59%                |
| <b>Online events languages and culture</b>  | 108                | 28                 | 286%                      | <b>10,327</b>            | 6,814                    | 52%                 |
| <b>In-person events</b>                     | 114                | 95                 | 20%                       | <b>3,265</b>             | 2,492                    | 31%                 |

\* One 2025 event, 'Where can languages take me?' careers webinar, involved 32,000 pupils and 143 schools - which skews the 2025 and 2026 figures. The same event in 2026 involved 5,711 and 44 schools, as British Council now deliver these more regularly.

# Festival programme summary

# WHAT'S ON

Create your own Festival programme!



North East Festival of Languages

6 January to 31 March 2026



Pick and mix from FREE events, classroom activities and competitions to build skills and celebrate diverse languages, cultures and global connections

## Creative multilingual projects (6 Jan-31 March)

- **Festival song:** Love is the Only River (ages 7-18)
- **Mother Tongue Other Tongue** poetic writing activity (ages 7-18)
- **Together we Fly** origami project (ages 5-18)
- **Language Calligrams** Celebration (ages 7-9 and 9-11)
- **World Recipe Book** exploring food and cultural heritage (ages 7-18)

## Classroom activities (6 January-31 March)

- **Culture Box Asia:** Indian and Chinese cultural workshops (KS2-5)
- **Ursa Lingua's Castle Quest** Escape Room Adventure (KS2)
- **Multilingual Me:** Exploring and celebrating languages (KS2)
- **Yorùbá workshops:** Language, Culture, Expression (KS2)
- **French puppet shows** (EYFS, KS1-2)
- **Stories from around the world:** Food on Film activities (ages KS1-3)
- **6 Primary French lessons: World Cup 2026** (Y5-6, Y7)
- **Exploring and celebrating indigenous African languages** (KS1-4)
- **Afro-Ecuadorian Fairy tales** resources (English/Spanish) (KS2-5)
- **Fun with Japanese** interactive activities (KS1-2)
- **Multilingual digital stories** -5 films made by children (KS2-4)
- **Fun with Felix and Franzl** primary German lessons (KS1-2)
- **Spanish Cinema in the Classroom** (KS4-5) films and resources

## Live languages and cultures events (Jan-March)

- **Munich Supercrew** schools' workshop/concert (KS3-5), 20 January
- **Love Your Language Party** at West End Library, 16 February
- **Love Your Language Day** at Newcastle City Library, 21 February
- **Learn Arabic with songs and games** (KS2) 6 sessions January to March
- **Language Student Immersion** at Durham Uni (KS5) Flex 12 Jan-6 Mar
- **Asian Creative Journeys** (KS2-5) Indian & Chinese workshops, Feb-Mar
- **Afro-Ecuadorian Fairytales** Multilingual Libr. (KS2-3) 4, 11, 25 Feb, 11 Mar
- **Language and culture sessions (with careers)** (KS2-5) at Newcastle University Language Resource Centre, Flexible dates Feb-March
- **Primary Games & stories at Multilingual Library** Flexible dates in March
- **Durham Children's University Primary webinar** (KS2) French) 2 March
- **Lingua Cub's French Fun! 4 online sessions** (3-7 yrs) 4, 11, 18, 25 March
- **Language Treasures at Great North Museum** (KS2-3) 4 March and self-guided teacher-led activities throughout March
- **Experience Japan workshops** (KS2) in Newcastle, 13 March
- **Lingua Cub's Super Spanish! 4 sessions** (3-7yrs) 6, 13, 20, 27 March
- **Wuschel online German sessions** (KS1-2), 9 and 16 March
- **Welcome to China events** (3-18 yrs), 10, 11, 12, 17, 18 and 19 March
- **#LetAfghanGirlsLearn! Webinar** (KS4-5), 10 March
- **Welcome to Japan Workshops** with Durham University, 11 March
- **Bilingual poetry online French/English** (KS4-5), 12 March
- **Mini Olympics** with Newcastle University (Y3-5), 12 March
- **Experience Japan with the Japan Society** (KS2), 13 March, Newcastle
- **Durham Children's University secondary webinar** (KS3-4) 16 March
- **Ursa Lingua's French Feast KS2 live lesson online**, 17 March
- **Y12 French, German, Spanish** 18 March, Northumbria University
- **Ursa Lingua's Spanish Surprise KS2 live lesson** 19 March
- **Creative multilingualism** (KS4) 19 March at Newcastle University
- **Yorùbá in-person cultural workshops** (KS2) 24 and 30 March, Newcastle
- **Welcome to the Arab World workshops** (Y5-8), 23 March, Newcastle
- **Chinese Documentary Film Screening** (KS4-5), 25 March
- **Bangla workshops** in Sunderland (KS2-5), 25 March
- **Celebrating Bengali language, culture, heritage** (KS2) 26 Mar, Newcastle
- **Multilingual Poetry Slam** (KS3-5), 27 March in Newcastle

## Festival competitions

- **La Petite Crêperie Competition** (KS2-3) NE schools 6 Jan-6 Mar
- **¡Cocina y Crea! Spanish Omelette Recipe Challenge** (KS2-3) North East Schools, 6 January-6 February
- **Karneval Mask Competition** (KS2-4) NE/UK schools 6 Jan-6 Mar

## Languages and Careers events and resources

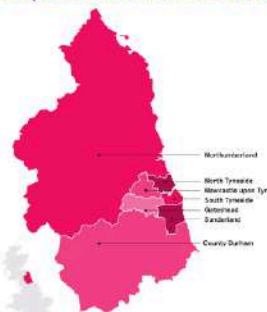
- **North East language and careers videos and classroom activities** Available 6 Jan-31 March
- **Modern Languages in the Working World webinar** (Y8-9), 2 March
- **Spanish language and careers webinar** (Y8-9), 3 March
- **Spanish Apprentice Y10 Tourism Challenge**, 4 Mar, Bishop Auckland
- **Languages at Work webinar & language challenge** (Y8-9) 5 March
- **Futbol Lingo languages and careers webinar** (KS2-5), 6 March
- **Where can languages take you? Webinar** (Y8-9), 26 March
- **Futbol Lingo workshops** at Northumbria Uni (KS3-5), 31 March
- **How Languages Changed my Life** stories

## Events for teachers

- **Becoming a European Parliament Ambassador School** 29 January
- **Spanish Teachers' Day** at Newcastle University 14 March
- **Designing cross-curriculum tasks to build competence** 16 March

## UK competitions, celebrations, resources

- **German Week 19-24 January** UK primary and secondary schools
- **JaLaChamp** (Japanese) primary and secondary, November-March
- **World Children's Haiku Contest** (U15s) submissions by 28 February
- **French Pop Video Competition**, register by February, submit May
- **Anthea Bell Prize for Young Translators**, open until 27 March
- **Joutes oratoires lycéennes** French debating competition for 6th forms, regional heats to February, final in March
- **World Speech Day Japan 21<sup>st</sup> March 2026**
- **Multilingual Verses** Open competition, various deadlines to 2027
- **Celebrate Speaking!** Festival of speaking languages, 1-28 Feb
- **ENACT Around the World Club packs** (North East, UK, Worldwide)
- **Around the World Education Packs** from British Council
- **British Council languages support** for schools
- **Association for Language Learning** and ALL North East
- **National Consortium for Languages Education**
- **European Centre for Modern Languages**



The full programme is open to all schools in the North East Combined Authority area.

There is a programme of activities for UK schools

International schools can get involved with North East partners and 'Together we Fly'

Festival participation supports:



Scan QR code for Festival website



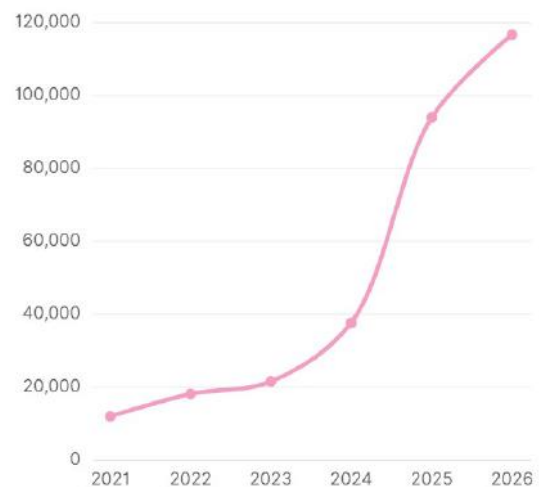
# Festival participation

The 2026 Festival had record breaking participation levels across all activities, with more children and young people involved than ever and an exponential **864% increase over 6 years**.

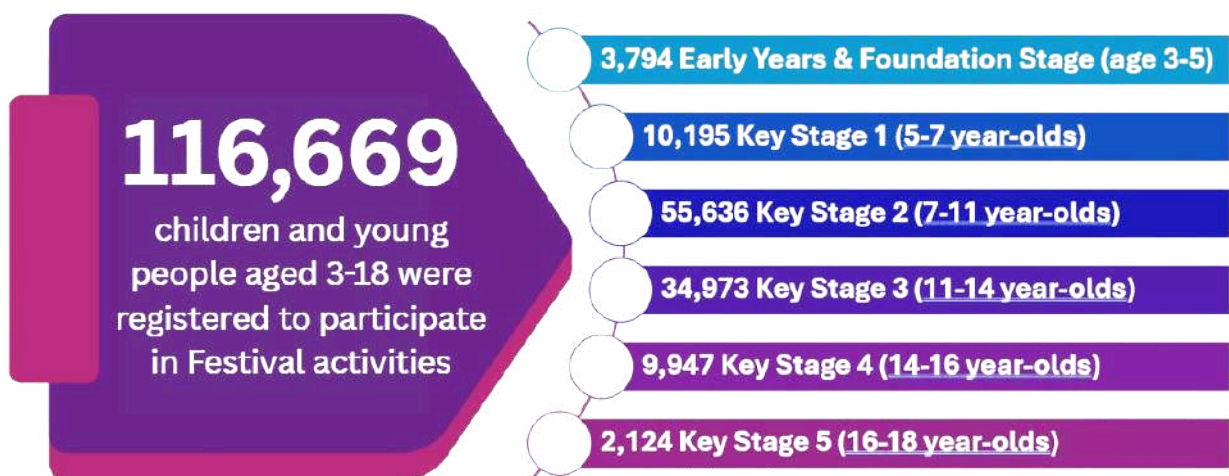
The full, free programme was aimed at North East Mayoral Strategic Authority area schools (Newcastle, Northumberland, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Gateshead, Sunderland, Durham), who were encouraged to and did 'pick and mix' activities. There was an expanded UK schools' programme and opportunities for international schools to get involved with projects.

## Festival participation 2021-2026

Number of children and young people (aged 3-18) registered to participate



## Festival participation 2026 by age



**73,574 children and young people** from **214 North East MSA area schools** (7 local authorities) were registered to take part across the full programme (**55% increase on 2025**)

**4,944 young people** in **21 Tees Valley schools** were involved creative multilingual projects, three competitions, languages and careers webinars and some in person events

**34,165 children and young people** in **204 UK schools** engaged in languages and careers webinars, online language events, the Karneval Mask competition and classroom activities

**3,807 children and young people** in **25 schools from 12 countries** engaged in the Together we Fly world friendship project and some classroom activities (**171% increase on 2025**)

**262 schools** were new to the Festival in 2026

## 14 Classroom activities (January-March)

47,347 pupils from 344 schools took part

- Engaging children in activities around different languages and cultures through quizzes, puppet shows, adventure quests, language sessions, games, songs, discussions, cultural activities, stories and films
- With teaching and pupil resources to enable them to be delivered at convenient times in schools, community schools and youth groups
- Encouraging creativity, promoting multicultural learning, supporting inclusion and tolerance, learning about each other
- The number of classroom activities doubled from 2025 to 2026 due to demand and requests from schools in the 2025 feedback survey

## 21 Live online events (March)

30,089 pupils from 277 schools took part

- 5 languages and careers webinars to broaden perspectives about opportunities for speakers of more than one language, encouraging take up of GCSE/A Level language options (19,762 participants, 169 schools)
- Engaging language lessons (Spanish, French, German) from Early Years to KS2 with activity packs to inspire young learners and for GCSE learners and A Level learners (10,279 participants from 104 schools)
- One webinar for 14-18 year olds to encourage awareness and support for girls' access to education in Afghanistan

## Five creative multilingual projects (6 Jan-31 Mar)

26,097 pupils took part from 229 schools took part

- Large scale participation creative projects with teaching resources
- Using art, singing and writing, as well as an exploration of heritage recipes to enable children and young people to express themselves in their home languages or languages they are learning
- Promoting celebration of languages and cultures within schools to build confidence, promote inclusion and inspire future learning
- Certificates for all schools taking part in each project
- Creative legacy products produced: public exhibition of the art project and digital photobook; digital anthologies of two writing projects; a world recipe book; and a compilation video of children performing the Festival Song in different languages

## Three Festival Competitions (January-Feb and March)

9,871 pupils from 107 schools took part

- La Petite Crêperie (French) and Spanish Omelette design competitions open to KS2-3 pupils in North East schools and Karneval Mask (German) competition open to KS2-4 pupils UK-wide
- Creative activities with teaching resources, including cultural context and language prompts and pupil templates for entries
- Winners chosen by organisers received prizes and there were two French and Spanish winners' workshops for North East schools

## 66 in-person events (January to 31st March)

3,265 pupils from 114 schools took part

- World language and culture events for KS1-3 to widen perspectives, broaden horizons and increase intercultural awareness
- Secondary school focussed activities to engage pupils in inspiring activities to promote language progression and take up
- University on campus experiences with staff and students to break down barriers, raise aspirations and promote progression

Other freely available language celebrations, competitions, resources



# Impact on pupils and schools

Based on the evidence of participation and feedback from teachers, pupils and delivery partners, the Festival met its aims and objectives around impact:



Engaged schools and reached children and young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds and underrepresented groups, who would not usually access these activities or have opportunities to engage



Widened perspectives of children and young people and teachers about the benefits of speaking their own and other languages, language learning and intercultural awareness for future life, education and career opportunities



Increased opportunities for pupil engagement in languages and careers events and activities and access to resources which may not be currently accessed by schools



Encouraged language learning take up and progression in North East Mayoral Strategic Authority area schools



Increased exposure to and understanding of Home Heritage and Community Languages and different cultures to build understanding within the school community and celebrate the linguistic and cultural diversity



Increased university links and real-world on campus experiences for schools to widen engagement, raise aspirations and inspire learning and progression



Helped schools and pupils build connections with a broader range of language, culture and career partners than they would usually access

**82%** pupils enjoyed a new activity

**79%** pupils tried something new

**69%** pupils were more motivated about language learning

**68%** teachers said they used activities to promote language learning

**60%** pupils were more aware of the importance of learning & speaking other languages

**60%** schools were able to celebrate diverse languages and cultures

**46%** pupils are more motivated to continue studying languages

**37%** used activities to profile and celebrate the languages and cultures of their pupils

# Teachers' feedback: Classroom and online activities

*"Children enjoyed both activities (Stories from Around the World - Food on Film and Multilingual Me KS2 lesson), which sparked great discussion about the topics. Children referred to own experiences of speaking other languages at home or other countries they come from. We explored why people learn languages, is it easy to speak another language, how does it make you feel when you understand other languages. They enjoyed watching One Plate Maggi and discussed the animation, language and plot at length. They had interesting reflection about the Butter Toast about food wastage."*

Patrycja Eagle, Moorside Primary School, Newcastle

*"The children enjoyed the short videos (Stories from around the World - Food on Film), shared their favourite foods from around the world and made posters. Favourite food shared was falafel."*

Ruth Hodgkins, Star of the Sea Primary, Whitley Bay, North Tyneside

*"The children really enjoyed this task (Ursa Lingua Castle Quest). They were very enthusiastic and were thrilled when they saw their home language represented."*

Sarah Symm, Canning Street Primary, Newcastle

*"Pupils loved learning the French rap and exploring the football vocabulary!" (World Cup French lessons Year 6-7)*

Helen Evans, Newminster Middle School, Morpeth

*"The children very much enjoyed learning about a language which is very different to their own." (Fun with Japanese)*

Clair Blackett, Grangetown Primary School, Sunderland

*"We watched Manolito Gafotas and I found it really useful. Students liked it too." (Spanish Cinema in the Classroom)*

Veronica Gonzalez Otero, Jesmond Park Academy, Newcastle

*"Great experience - the children (Reception) loved learning a new language through puppets and still use 'Gutentag' to greet the teacher during morning registration." (Wuschel online German)*

Kate Bruce, South Gosforth First School, Newcastle

*"Our students didn't know what a webinar was, so this was a new experience all round. The webinar created a lot of excitement, and they loved seeing which other schools were taking part... They were very engaged and it sparked some great conversations afterwards. The presenters targeted their audiences well, and our pupils really responded. They loved the avatar used by the GCHQ man. It created a sense of mystery, I think."*

Jo Hardy, St Thomas More Catholic School, Blaydon, Gateshead

*"We delivered the Futbol Lingo to Y9 students (who have already taken their options). It was a great event and the feedback from the students was entirely positive. Other staff thought the career angles of all the other associated careers which would benefit from having another language was great too. Both groups completed the workbooks that came with the sessions. These were excellent and provided a focus for students during the sessions."*

Dawn Hale, St. John's Catholic School & Sixth Form, Bishop Auckland



# Impact on children and young people

By empowering children and young people with language skills, intercultural competence and access to opportunities, the Festival helped to break down barriers, unlock their potential, and create pathways to brighter futures.



## Promoting literacy and oracy

Widening access to diverse linguistic resources and immersive experiences helped to empower pupils to develop strong literacy and oracy skills, essential for academic success and lifelong learning



## Promoting language learning

Having fun with languages and enabling pupils to enjoy learning, see the opportunities available and develop their interest in continuing their language learning journeys



## Providing accessible learning opportunities

Offering different age groups many ways to engage (in-person, online, live, pre-recorded, through projects and competitions) widened accessibility to pupils in schools and community schools



## Expanding Cultural Capital

Celebrating linguistic and cultural diversity exposed pupils to new ideas, perspectives and traditions, broadening their cultural horizons, developing cross-cultural competencies and a sense of belonging



## Inspiration and Empowerment

Showcasing role models, language enthusiasts and success stories, helped inspire and empower children and young people to explore their linguistic potential, pursue their passion for languages and embrace multiculturalism as a source of strength and enrichment



## Promoting multilingualism

Celebrating linguistic diversity helped empower children and young people from diverse backgrounds have pride in their identity, embrace their home languages and be inspired to learn more languages



## Widening perspectives on career pathways

Offering a range of languages and careers webinars, in-person events and resources helped widen perspectives about the wide range of career opportunities available to young people who develop language and intercultural skills

# Teachers' feedback: Creative projects & Competitions

*"I really love taking part in the calligram competition as it's a creative way to do some writing for the children. It's also accessible so that all the children can have a successful project, and they always enjoy it as an activity. Some really enjoy the competitive element and seeing their (or their friend's work published in the online book!"*

Fleur Dunlop, Regent Park First School, Newcastle

*"We thoroughly enjoyed this activity (Mother Tongue Other Tongue). The children were delighted to share with one another their own languages and it created a lovely buzz around school, more so than we expected, so thank you."*

Sarah Murray, Barnes Junior School, Sunderland

*"The students loved the Festival song. We worked together with the Music department, so it was a great opportunity to collaborate. Students from a range of backgrounds worked together, including our Young Interpreters. We thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the Love is the only river!"*

Gemma Neale, Excelsior Academy, Newcastle

*"Children loved this activity (La Petite Crêperie design competition) and were very motivated to learn lots of new vocabulary. Good opportunities for individual approaches to learning. Children all had their own experiences of eating crêpes so could relate this well to the French vocabulary."*

Michelle Ray, Framwellgate Moor Primary School, County Durham

*"It has been an excellent opportunity to engage our students in the wonderful activity of butterfly origami. The Together we Fly project broadened the cultural horizons of our students in terms of the ever fascinating art of origami as being part of Japanese art heritage. Friendship, love and kindness were thoroughly discussed as pillars of harmonious living in all societies."*

Eleni Fytily, 13th Primary School of Xanthi, Greece

*"This was a fun activity that we did in our after school club (Spanish Omelette design challenge). We followed it up by going to the DT department and cooking our tortillas. The students really enjoyed it. Moving forward I would probably spend more time in the designing part (we only do MFL club once a fortnight) and open it up to more students, with an in house competition to send the best design."*

Christelle Young, Jarrow School, Jarrow, South Tyneside

*"We adapted the German Carnival mask competition to include all four languages taught, as it was so popular across Year 9. We made internal awards with prizes in Spanish and Italian."*

Jennifer King, Goforth Academy, Newcastle

*"Our children loved the activities, and they were very easy to access." (Together we Fly and Crêpe Competition)*

Ella James, Springmoor Grange School, Spennymoor, Co. Durham



# Creative multilingual projects' legacy products

The Festival's five creative multilingual projects embraced the creativity and diversity of North East children and young people. Inclusive singing, writing and art activities enabled pupils to express themselves in their home languages, languages they learn or are interested in. These projects created opportunities to explore and celebrate the diverse backgrounds, languages and heritage of the school community and to build a sense of inclusion, understanding and belonging.

All schools received a certificate for participating and received the creations below. These show the value of these activities, provide a lasting Festival legacy and showcase boundless creativity.



## Festival Song Video - Love is the only river

Compilation video of children and young people performing the Festival song in different languages. 5,694 children and young people from 56 schools took part in signing, singing or playing the song. [Click here to watch the Festival song video](#)



## Mother Tongue Other Tongue Anthology

Selected poems in 35 languages from children and young people writing in their home language or a language they learn, with some audio recordings of children reading their poems. 3,690 children from 30 schools took part. [Click here to read the digital anthology](#)



## Together we Fly installation and photobook

Public exhibition of origami butterflies created by children and young people with messages of friendship, love and kindness in 46 different languages. 12,527 children from 101 North East and international schools took part. [Click here to view the Together we Fly project photobook](#)



## Language Calligrams Celebration ebooks

Children created images using words in different languages relating to the subject. Selected entries are included in two ebooks. 2,075 children aged 7-11 from 26 schools took part. [Click here to view the 7-9 year olds Calligrams ebook](#)  
[Click here to read the 9-11 year olds Calligrams ebook](#)



## World Recipe Book

Children and young people shared their favourite family recipes and why they are important to them, using a language other than English. Selected entries are included in an ebook. 2,111 pupils from 16 schools took part. [Click here to view the North East multilingual recipe ebook](#)

# Teachers' feedback: In-person events

*"This was a fantastic event and inspired our quietest and most reluctant pupils to stand before a vast audience and perform their poetry. They were positive before, during and after the event. Thank you for the opportunity of bringing their languages to life outside of the classroom." (Multilingual Poetry Slam KS3-5)*

Rachel Said, Morpeth Chantry Middle School, Northumberland

*"Superb events - our pupils really enjoyed the experience and still talk about them now." (Language and Culture Sessions at Northumbria University Language Resource Centre)*

Lauren Thompson, Tweedmouth Community Middle School, Berwick

*"The Futbol Lingo workshop was excellent. The students were all fully engaged throughout and their feedback afterwards was positive. The balance of activities was great and they really enjoyed being able to use their language skills in a fun and practical way. The speakers leading the workshop were really engaging." (Language and careers in football)*

Naomi Wynd, Jarrow School, South Tyneside

*"We attended the event with 26 Y9 students who were really inspired and excited by the band and the concert. I have been using the songs in lessons and the students are singing and clapping along. It's a great joy and very inspirational. Many thanks for organising this event." (Munich Supercrew workshop and concert at Great Park Academy)*

Angelika Schneider, Gosforth Academy, Newcastle

*"We went to 'Japan Day' at Durham University and it was brilliant! I sent an email to the organiser afterwards complimenting them on a fantastic workshop. Activities and staff were great and we had an amazing time."*

Kayleigh Tuimoala, Choristers School, Durham

*"The event at the Multilingual library in Gateshead was enjoyed by all pupils who attended, they enjoyed the opportunity to hear a fairytale, learn a different language in a fun and creative way." (Afro- Educadorian Fairytales at the Multilingual Library)*

Name and school not given

*"As in previous years, the experience has been absolutely wonderful." (Y12 activities at Northumbria University Language Centre)*

Veronica Gonzalez Otero, Jesmond Park Academy, Newcastle

*"We loved these, the live, in person events are the highlight for us!" (Asian Creative Journeys in-school workshops and Learn Arabic with Songs and Games)*

Alisdair Bright, St. Cuthbert's Primary School Kenton, Newcastle

*"Our children (and staff!) loved our trip to the Welcome to the Arab World event. They came away full of excitement and feeling that they had all learned a lot, they were practising their Arabic on the walk back to school! All of the experts involved were hugely engaging and made the sessions fun and memorable."*

Rebekah Walker, St Paul's CofE Primary School, Newcastle



# Festival films - case studies

Five films, 2-3 minutes each, were produced with B7 videographers, delivery partners and schools to showcase the Festival and provide examples of activities and events and their impact. These provide an accessible way to understand key elements of the Festival and a legacy for future Festivals.



## Highlights of the 2026 Festival

Short film showcasing activities and events during this year's Festival - including in-person events with primary and secondary pupils, with comments from partners, teachers and children and young people.

[Click here to watch](#)



## Munich Supercrew workshop and concert

This film showcases the event with 235 pupils from five North East secondary schools. Bringing their unique brand of teaching German through music, the band inspired, engaged and wowed the young people, who engaged enthusiastically - in German!

[Click here to watch](#)



## Asian Creative Journeys in-school workshop

Pupils at St Cuthbert's Primary School Kenton in Newcastle. Children learned about traditional Indian culture by making traditional Kathputli puppets from Rajasthan with artist Lily Daniels from GemArts.

[Click here to watch](#)



## Multilingual Poetry Slam

This film documents a full day event involving a team of international poets running workshops for over 100 young people from across the North East, who then took to the stage for a lively, high-energy multilingual slam.

[Click here to watch](#)



## Bangla Day in Sunderland

This film showcases an event with 100 pupils from Sunderland and County Durham at Sunderland Bangladesh International Centre (SBIC), celebrating rich Bangladeshi culture, heritage, traditions and language.

[Click here to watch](#)

# Teachers' feedback: 2026 Festival experience

*"Brilliant festival. We would not be able to offer such a range of international experiences without it...Having events run in places of local cultural capital, such as unis and the civic centre, is a big bonus to us and diversifies our children's experience of UK life too."*

Rebekah Walker, St. Paul's CE Primary School, Newcastle

*"Again, we found that the festival provided many exciting opportunities. Two of the activities we chose we were able to share with our partner school in Germany. The children who saw their work published in an e-book were extremely proud and it really raised their self esteem and confidence in using another language. The friendship butterflies were particularly poignant at this moment in time with so much conflict. The children could stop and think about the importance of friendship."*

Jackie Lombard, Wingate Primary School, Durham

*"My school thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the festival. There was something for every age group and all pupils felt involved and valued their activities. Thank you."*

Helen Evans, Newminster School, Morpeth, Northumberland

*"My students were enriched by these opportunities; thank you for providing them!"*

Jennifer Meechan, St Joseph's Catholic Academy, Hebburn

*"The children in our region are so lucky to have The North East Festival of Languages! Each year they learn about different cultures and languages and it is so impactful."*

Alisdair Bright, St. Cuthbert's Primary School, Kenton, Newcastle

*"As always, this was a wonderful event with a huge range of activities which helped students see the relevance and importance of different languages in our region, country and across the world. Each year, more of the school is involved in the Festival. Next year, I would like to be able to use the Festival as a whole school celebration of language learning and home languages."*

Janet Stephenson, King James I Academy, Bishop Auckland

*"It has helped us raise the profile of languages and has tied into other activities we do as a school, such as the GCHQ code-breaking, and our work with our Italian partner school. Being able to challenge some of the prevailing narratives and show how exciting languages can be, has been important. It also allowed us to expand our pupils' expectations, which is not something that can happen overnight, but this festival played an important part in that work, especially with our Year 9s."*

Jo Hardy, St Thomas More Catholic School, Blaydon, Gateshead



| Teachers' feedback - Quality   | Excellent | Good | Satisfactory | Poor |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------|--------------|------|
| People delivering the activity | 74%       | 21%  | 5%           | 0%   |
| Content                        | 76%       | 22%  | 2%           | 0%   |
| Materials available            | 72%       | 25%  | 3%           | 0%   |
| Access to the event/activity   | 69%       | 28%  | 3%           | 0%   |

139 responses

# Festival partners

The success of the Festival is based upon the strong and extensive partnership that supports it. Partners' ideas, support and commitment to the Festival is what makes it so unique and so impactful. In 2026, 55 local, regional, national and international partners were central to the co-creation, delivery and promotion of a diverse, high-quality, free programme of language and cultural activities, with some new partners joining for 2026.

B7 videographers produced five filmed legacy case studies and social media content. In addition to providing content, Newcastle and Northumbria Universities helped engage five student interns. Most partners provided in-kind support. Funding for core costs was from the North East Strategic Mayoral Authority and for events from QFI, EU, Goethe-Institut UK and Institut français.

Every year, new activities are developed, based on the previous year's feedback. In 2026, in addition to teachers' feedback, partners responded to a survey. They shared what worked well, benefits from taking part, areas for improvement and how they would like to be involved in future. 44 partners responded to the survey. Results will be reviewed with teachers' feedback and in relation to the analysis of monitoring data to inform future Festival planning.

| Festival planning and communication                             | Excellent | Good | Satisfactory | Poor |
|---|-----------|------|--------------|------|
| Support and communication from the Festival Team                | 91%       | 9%   | 0%           | 0%   |
| Clarity of guidelines for taking part and delivering activities | 84%       | 16%  | 0%           | 0%   |
| Support during delivery   | 84%       | 13%  | 3%           | 0%   |
| Promotion of the activity                                       | 91%       | 9%   | 2%           | 0%   |

Partners clearly felt that they were well supported throughout the planning, promotion and delivery phases of the Festival. They cited the strong support and guidance from the Festival Coordinator and clear process for engagement and preparing activities. They also appreciated the flexibility around timings and responsiveness to addressing any challenges and barriers.

A positive suggestion was to bring partners together online before the Festival goes live so they can meet, understand what each other is delivering and develop relationships.

| Satisfaction with the Festival delivery experience (applicable responses) | Excellent | Good | Satisfactory | Poor |
|---|-----------|------|--------------|------|
| Preparedness for the delivery of the activity                             | 85%       | 15%  | 0%           | 0%   |
| Engagement of pupils in the activity                                      | 84%       | 16%  | 0%           | 0%   |
| Outcomes from the delivery of the activity                                | 78%       | 22%  | 0%           | 0%   |

## Challenges to be addressed

- Some partners commented that they experienced their own challenges around staffing and capacity and also timings for universities' staff engagement. Depending on what they are delivering and how activities are delivered, discussions with partners will seek to accommodate these issues. Some of these challenges are beyond the scope of the Festival.
- Some creative multilingual project leads stated schools had not always followed the guidelines or timelines for submissions, which had caused some difficulties in producing the creative legacy products (e-books, song). Resource packs and guidance for submissions are very specific, but can be reviewed to determine whether there could be improvements.
- There were challenges around some of the in-person events, where some schools who had booked in November for events in March dropped out close to the date of the event (despite reminders a month before), did not turn up or arrived late, for various reasons. Where possible in the case of drop-outs, the Festival Coordinator sought to find replacement schools. This has been an ongoing issue and requires further consideration, as it is very disappointing for partners and means that schools on the waiting list do not get the opportunity to attend events. Additional reminders and requests can be sent to schools and timings of events could also be reviewed, to enable schools to arrive in good time.

## Support which would enhance partner contributions

Most partners felt that they were already adequately supported and did not need anything additional to support their contributions. There were some suggestions:

- Staffing and funding support - acknowledging that the Festival relies on partners' in-kind contributions, but there may be opportunities to support funding applications.
- Feedback from schools after events - some feedback received from teachers' is shared immediately, as are articles about activities, but the teachers' feedback survey is the main source and this is shared with the final report for partners.

**Benefits of taking part in the Festival** - Partners had a wide range of positive experiences:

| %   | Benefit to partners from engaging with the Festival                           |
|-----|---|
| 89% | Greater reach to schools in the North East                                    |
| 80% | Increased visibility and profile of your organisation and activities          |
| 82% | Playing an active role in promoting languages and intercultural understanding |
| 82% | Celebrating linguistic and cultural diversity                                 |
| 73% | Being part of a well-established Festival                                     |
| 59% | Supporting priorities around education, skills and global awareness           |
| 50% | Developing partnerships and collaborations                                    |
| 48% | Greater reach to schools in the UK  |
| 45% | Building meaningful relationships with participants                           |
| 39% | Gaining experience of delivering activities to new or larger audiences        |
| 39% | Opening new opportunities for future joint projects                           |

# Partners' feedback: Additional benefits of taking part

*"Participating in the festival gave KÁYÌNE an opportunity to demonstrate what culturally rich and a joyful education looks like in practice and to do that in front of teachers, schools and children especially who can carry that forward. It also gave me personal confidence in the programme and reinforced that there is a real value for this kind of work in the North East."*

Victoria Eniola, Káyìne Education (Yorùbá workshops)

*"It was great to be able to engage schoolchildren in some of the findings from our research project. Teachers were very receptive to the resources and enthusiastic about engaging with us. Our partners in Ecuador were also very happy to know that we were sharing their work with children in the UK."*

Professor Katy Jenkins, Northumbria University Centre for Global Development (Afro-Ecuadorian Fairytales and Recipe Book)

*"Holding the pupil day in the northeast gave us an opportunity to reach young people we had not previously engaged with and to firmly establish a solid relationship with the festival organisers. Over the years that we have been involved the organisers themselves have taken a more active role in putting the event together using a format that QFI created and this for us represents an excellent model of partnership."*

Tony Calderbank, QFI (Welcome to the Arab World)

*"Newcastle schools participating in the Critical Connections Project and film festivals."*

Professor Vicky Macleroy, Goldsmiths, University of London (Multilingual Digital Stories - Critical Connections)

*"Being able to support and promote Japanese and Japan-related learning in North East."*

Rebecca Lee, The Japan Society (Experience Japan, Fun with Japanese)

*"I feel that I have made new friends by being part of this project - it is truly a wonderful project and teachers feel well supported so come back year after year. This is not just testament to the MTOT project but also to the success of the Festival. It is important to play a small part in this incredible celebration of languages and cultures and I hope to continue to do so."*

Crista Hazell, Project Coordinator (Mother Tongue Other Tongue)

*"Promoting BSL (British Sign Language) as well as other languages."*

Georgina Biddle, Newcastle Music Service (Festival Song)

*"As an arts charity our focus and goal in working with schools is to celebrate culture through art, by including language in the activities we delivered we were able to share a skill that is usually hidden in our workshops- facilitators language skills. This has been a great opportunity for us to work with our artists and celebrate a facet of their culture and skills that is not often spotlighted."*

Lily Daniels, GemArts  
(Asian Creative Journeys in-school workshops and Culture Box Asia)



# Partners' feedback: Festival experience

*"Thank you very much for including us in the festival. We were very pleased with the wide reach of the competition and excellent contributions from students."*

Tamara Aberle, British-German Association (Karneval Mask Comp.)

*"We are huge supporters of the festival and its ambitions. We were very pleased and proud to be part of such an established and successful event."*

Jeannette Baxter, Day of Welcome/Anglia Ruskin University (Multilingual Me KS2 lesson)

*"The experience has been very positive in terms of the impact of our programmes and resources, and we look forward to collaborating in the next edition."*

Antonio Goñi, Spanish Embassy Education Office (Spanish Cinema in the Classroom, Spanish Language and Careers webinar)

*"Many thanks for this year's edition of the Festival! We were delighted that we could support Michaël's workshop and teaching resources. Many thanks also for promoting the Institut's French Pop Video Competition."*

Anne-Lise Gallay, Institut français du Royaume-Uni (Bilingual Poetry webinar, World Cup French resources, Multilingual Poetry Slam)

*"Thank you for hosting such a wonderful Festival. It is inspirational and there is nothing like it elsewhere in the world and certainly not in the UK. Declan Baharini is a visionary who has brought many different people together working extremely hard to bring communities and peoples together across the North East not only for the Festival but also as a Steering group. I am proud to play a part it is the highlight of my year being part of this festival and working with schools to encourage them to make time for all languages through this important Mother Tongue Other Tongue Project."*

Crista Hazell, Association for Language Learning, (Mother Tongue Other Tongue project and Festival Steering Group)

*"A HUGE WELL DONE again in promoting language learning and the diversity of languages spoken in the region."*

Caroline Afolabi-Deleu, Success4All, The Language Collaboration Project and North East Arabic Teachers Council (Learn Arabic with games and stories, Exploring Indigenous African Languages)

*"It's been a real pleasure to be linked to a wider piece of work that so well reflects our values and ethos."*

Lily Daniels, Gem Arts (Asian Creative Journeys, Culture Box Asia)

*It cemented existing partnerships (Institut Français) and allowed me to try new ways of working: making a Unit of work and a webinar using a white board. Webinar: great support and advice prior and during. The workshop went well with some use of the padlet by schools. Slam worked well with 4 schools... this iteration showed it works with KS3 students too! Partnership with Durham Uni helped in having a language expert in each group as well as engaged teachers and this remedied the young age of some participants."*

Michaël Vidon, Poet and Teacher (Bilingual Poetry webinar, World Cup French resources, Multilingual Poetry Slam)





The North East Arabic Teachers' Council



Newcastle University



Northumbria University NEWCASTLE



Newcastle University CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE in partnership with Xiamen University



Teikyo University of Japan in Durham



Goldsmiths UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



British-German Association



# Adding value and raising awareness

The Festival seeks to raise awareness of the other activities, resources and support available to schools and groups relating to languages and intercultural awareness. It does this by:

- promoting UK and international celebrations and competitions as part of the Festival programme
- highlighting awareness raising campaigns and key dates during the Festival calendar
- encouraging participation in schools' initiatives which are specifically linked to the Festival ethos



In 2026, these included:

- [Shout out for German Week](#) (19-24 January)
- [JaLa Champ](#) Japanese language learners' contest (to March)
- [French Pop Video Competition](#) (February-May)
- [Anthea Bell Prize for Young Translators](#) (February-March)
- [Joutes oratoires lycéennes](#) (6<sup>th</sup> form French competition)
- [Celebrate Speaking!](#) (February)
- [World Children's Haiku Competition](#) (to March)
- [World Speech Day Japan](#) (21<sup>st</sup> March)
- [Multilingual Verses](#) (various deadlines to 2027)



UNESCO's [International Mother Language Day](#) (21st February) was promoted alongside multilingual activities and resources which could be used by schools, as well as Festival family events.

Other international activities were also profiled linked to Festival opportunities: Holocaust Memorial Day, Chinese New Year, and beyond the Festival, Refugee Week.



The International School Award was consistently promoted, with a featured [ISA webpage](#), links across the website, social media posts, newsletters and programmes. Festival activities add value to schools' efforts to embed internationalism across school communities. Schools could achieve the Foundation Certificate by participating in any one Festival activity, or progress through the levels using a range of activities. 26% of teachers' survey respondents said they had done this.



Promoting [Schools of Sanctuary](#) engagement was a key part of the Festival ethos, seeking to strengthen engagement and offer enrichment activities which support this work in schools.

Schools were encouraged to use Festival activities to support multilingualism, intercultural awareness and internationalism as part of their Schools of Sanctuary work.



The Festival raised awareness of the freely available resources and support available through universities, organisations and networks, that schools may not be aware of.

In addition, Festival activities in key language groups were promoted, alongside the support that is available for these languages in the North East and nationally.

55% of teachers responding to the survey accessed these resources.

# Costs and Communications

## Costs, contributions and value for money

| Festival funding contributions               | Amount          | % cost |
|--|-----------------|--------|
| North East Mayoral Strategic Authority grant | £70,450         | 34%    |
| Grants and awards for Festival activities    | £16,194         | 8%     |
| In-kind contributions (delivery partners)    | £117,710        | 58%    |
| <b>TOTAL FESTIVAL COSTS</b>                  | <b>£204,354</b> |        |

The total Festival costs were calculated based on grants and awards received and estimated in-kind contributions from delivery partners. The Festival levered significant resources for the region, delivered significant economies of scale and value for money: **£1.75 per pupil engagement**.

North East Mayoral Strategic Authority funding was essential to enable the Festival to be delivered. It supported co-ordination and evaluation, communications support, intern management, the production of five video case studies and the commissioning or contribution to seven Festival activities. Two interns were paid by Newcastle University and other funding supported three events: Multilingual Poetry Slam, Welcome to the Arab World and Munich Supercrew concert and workshop.

Most Festival activities were delivered by partners from their own resources, leveraging a significant amount of in-kind support for the Festival and for North East schools and groups in the North East.

## Communications

Promoting the Festival as widely as possible was a principal element of delivery, to engage North East schools in the range of enrichment opportunities available, as well as offering a UK Schools' programme and international schools' involvement in a world friendship project.

The main change in 2026, was the additional capacity for communications:

- Festival Coordinator – managed website, wrote articles, interviewed for articles and films
- Communications Coordinator (P/T) – Lead overseeing communications strategy and all related activities, managing media relations and B7 videographers' production of case study films
- Social Media Coordinator – Managing all social media posts and the five Festival student interns
- Volunteer Content Creator – providing articles and producing Festival e-newsletters
- Five Festival interns – Digital Content Creators from Northumbria and Newcastle Universities

The 2026 Festival reached more schools than ever before through a combination of direct mailings and indirect engagement with schools (through partner newsletters, presentations, a podcast), the Festival website and social media channels, as well as introducing a regular Festival e-newsletter.

Ongoing and regular communications, press releases, news items and social media posts were a key part of the strategy to build awareness of the Festival, as well as individual events, activities and resources on offer and reporting on outcomes and impact.

- **94,280** sessions on the Festival website and 14,091 active users
- **957,400** estimated reach of festival media stories (including print and digital versions)
- **1,041** followers across Festival X, facebook and instagram channels
- **225** Festival e-newsletter subscribers

In addition, a series of five filmed case studies were produced by B7 videographers and shared widely to highlight the Festival overall and events for primary and secondary schools reflecting the diversity of the programme. They can be used to encourage future engagement.

A very detailed analysis of communications and marketing was produced by the Communications Coordinator for the full evaluation report with a series of recommendations for consideration.

# Planning for the next Festival

Given the continued success of the Festival, demonstrated through its growing reach, impact on pupils and schools and the positive feedback from both teachers and partners, there is a strong desire and commitment to running the Festival again in 2027. This is dependent on core funding for the Festival Team, commissions and evaluation.

Funding is being explored and outcomes should be known in September. In the meantime, planning is starting (at risk) with partners, based on the success of the current programme, feedback from partners and teachers and suggestions for new activities. If funding is secured, the 2027 Festival timeline will be the same as this year, with ideation continuing to September, confirmation of content in October and the programme launching for advance registrations in November. A three month Festival would then run from January to March 2027, followed by evaluation.

| <b>PARTNERS' FEEDBACK SURVEY: What types of activity would you like to deliver in future?</b> | <b>% responses (no. partners)</b> |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| In-person events  | 69% (27)                          |
| Online events   | 54% (21)                          |
| Creative projects   | 46% (18)                          |
| Classroom activities (pre-recorded/teaching resources)  | 41% (16)                          |
| Competition   | 33% (13)                          |

| <b>TEACHERS' FEEDBACK SURVEY: If the Festival runs again next year, what would you like to see as part of the programme?</b> | <b>% responses (of 139)</b> |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Cultural activities (dance, music, art, writing)   | 68%                         |
| Online events  | 61%                         |
| Recordings of online events  | 58%                         |
| Competitions   | 57%                         |
| World language and culture events and activities   | 57%                         |
| Creative multilingual projects running January to March  | 54%                         |
| Pre-recorded classroom activities to access anytime during the 3-month Festival period                                       | 54%                         |
| Languages and careers events and activities  | 52%                         |
| Language taster sessions   | 51%                         |
| In-person events   | 46%                         |
| Events on university campuses  | 37%                         |

# Acknowledgements



**Kim McGuinness**  
North East  
Mayor

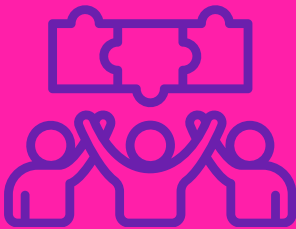
The **North East Mayoral Strategic Authority** provided core funding for Festival coordination, communications, commissions and evaluation, as well as supporting promotion. We are grateful for the support provided by North East Mayor Kim McGuinness and her staff.



Thank you to all the **children and young people, schools and teachers** who participated so enthusiastically in the Festival. We are also grateful to teachers who responded to the feedback survey, providing invaluable insights into how the activities were received, what worked well and what can be improved in future.



We are grateful to all our **delivery partners**, who provided a wealth of enriching activities for the Festival. Thanks also to the networks and partners who shared and promoted Festival activities across the North East and the UK. In addition, we thank our Festival videographers, B7 for producing five filmed case studies, providing insights into Festival experiences and legacy for the Festival.



Thank you to the **Festival Team, Interns** and **Festival Steering Group**, who have supported the Festival Coordinator in promoting and delivering the Festival. Special thanks to **Sarah Edgar** (Newcastle City Council) for managing the Festival grant and liaising closely with the Festival Team on all aspects of the Festival.

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